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Wealthy heirs no longer need to worry, but the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG) has cause for concern

The Swiss people voted yes twice and no twice on 14 June 2015. Proposals concerning a general fee for radio and television and a constitutional amendment concerning pre-implantation diagnostics (PID) were approved. The electorate rejected initiatives on inheritance tax and a federal solution for grants.

JÜRG MÜLLER

The result regarding the radio and television fee proposal was extremely tight with 50.1% voting in favour – 3,696 votes tipped the balance. This was despite the fact that the partial amendment of the Radio and Television Act only involved changing the financing system. Instead of the previous licence fees for device owners, a general fee is now being introduced for all households. The simple reason for this is that anyone can receive programmes today on computers, tablets and smartphones, even without owning a radio or television set. What sounds rather technical and was not a very contentious proposal initially nonetheless resulted in an epic media debate during the referendum campaign over the purpose and scope of public service provision by the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG) which is governed by public law. Opponents of the proposal branded the general fee a “media tax”. That clearly had the desired effect as new taxes are always unpopular. The debate over the SRG and public service media now undoubtedly looks set to continue. Whether this will be based on objective arguments or will carry on as venomously as during the past few weeks remains to be seen.

No hope for inheritance tax proposal

An initiative concerning social justice and redistribution of wealth once again stood no chance of succeeding. Coming shortly after the minimum wage and 1:12 initiative and the proposal on the abolition of flat-rate taxation, the left-green inheritance tax initiative was also heavily defeated on 14 June with 71% voting against it. The initiative's objective was to make inheritances subject to a 20% tax in future whereby a tax-exempt allowance of two million Swiss francs would have applied. Two thirds of revenues generated by the new tax would have gone to the old-age and survivors' insurance (AHV) scheme, while the cantons would have received one third.

PID – part two to come

Delicate ethical issues were discussed with the constitutional bill on pre-implantation diagnostics (PID), which was approved by 61.9% of voters. This concerns couples using artificial insemination being able to undergo PID. They can have the embryos tested for hereditary diseases and genetic defects before implantation into the woman in order to ensure that only embryos not affected by such diseases are used in the reproductive procedure. However, the debate is not yet over as Parliament adopted the implementing law at the same time as the constitutional amendment. The Evangelical People's Party (EVP) is to call a referendum against the law. It announced its intention during the referendum campaign.

Grants – cantons responsible

The Grants Act, which was little discussed during the referendum campaign, stood no chance with 72.5% opposed to the proposal. The initiative sought to harmonise the awarding of grants and thereby transfer legal competence from the cantons to federal government. Allowances during education and training also aimed to guarantee a minimum standard of living.

Candidate in the Canton of Zurich,
resident in Berlin

TIM GULDIMANN
The Internationalrat.

**FOR ALL
NOT JUST
A FEW**

National elections
of October 18th, 2015

www.spschweiz.ch/international

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